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**MORE THAN 600 ATHLETES REGISTERED FOR 2009
NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES IN SPOKANE**

SPOKANE, WASH. – May 8, 2009 – More than 600 Veterans from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain have registered to compete in the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world, the 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games. The Games will take place in Spokane, Wash., July 13-18, 2009. It is the second time the Games will take place in the state of Washington.

Presented by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), the Games are open to all U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, certain neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. The Spokane VA Medical Center and PVA's Northwest Chapter are hosting the Games. Eighteen local area Veterans are registered to attend.

Competing in and learning about wheelchair sports can play an important role in the lives of disabled people and have a lasting imprint on their lives. For many newly injured Veterans, the Games are their first exposure to wheelchair athletics. This exposure helps reinforce and introduce lifestyle changes that help keep our Nation's Veterans healthy and fit.

Competitive events will take place at the Spokane Convention Center, Spokane Falls Community College, Whitworth University and other venues in and around the Spokane area. The 2009 Games will include competitions in track and field, swimming, basketball, weightlifting, softball, quad rugby, air guns, 9-ball, bowling, table tennis, archery, handcycling, trapshooting, a motorized rally, power soccer and wheelchair slalom, which is a timed obstacle course. Athletes compete in all events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age. A Golf Clinic will also be offered this year.

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Wheelchair Games 2/2/2/2

In addition to the competitions and the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, the event will include a "Kids Day" at the Games on Friday, July 17, when local children with disabilities will interact with the athletes, participate in some sports events and watch the Veterans compete. The public is invited to attend any or all of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games. For a full listing of the schedule of events for the week, visit the Games Web site. All events are open to the public with free admission.

According to Spokane VA Medical Center Director, Sharon Helman, spectators are strongly encouraged to attend. "The Games are a great opportunity for Spokane residents to cheer on our amazing athletes," Helman said. "Spokane's history of hosting so many large programs and being a champion city for both Veterans and sports, makes us the perfect location for this incredible event."

To volunteer for the 29th National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Spokane, contact Kathy Kovalesky, Volunteer Coordinator for the Games, at (509) 434-7510 or Kathleen.Kovalesky2@va.gov.

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For more information about the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, or to follow events as they happen, visit the Games web site at www.wheelchairgames.va.gov